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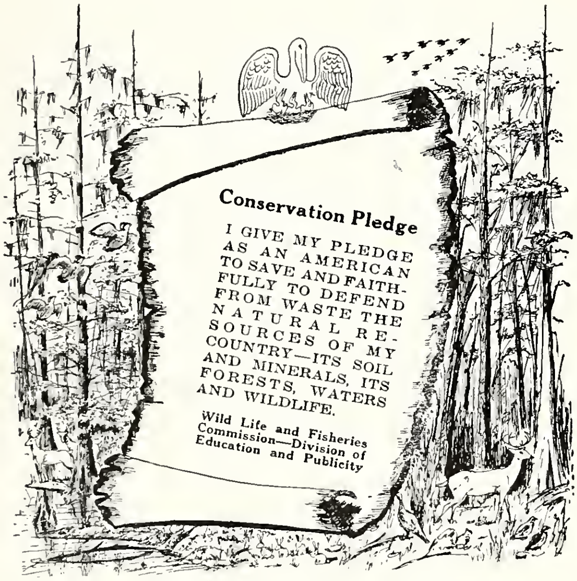

Conservation Pledge

I GIVE MY PLEDGE AS AN AMERICAN TO SAVE AND FAITHFULLY TO DEFEND FROM WASTE THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF MY COUNTRY—ITS SOIL AND MINERALS, ITS FORESTS, WATERS AND WILDLIFE.

Wild Life and Fisheries Commission—Division of Education and Publicity

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COVER

Baby crows in nest. *(Photo by Jack Britt)*

By F. Lamar Clement
Director
Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission

WHAT price burning? Spring cleaning takes many forms and one of them is the time honored custom of burning fencerows, weed patches and woodlands. For many generations, and in some localities for centuries, it has been the custom to set fire to the dead grass, weeds, brush and other debris along the fencerows, field borders and patches of woodland in this supposedly quick and easy way to tidy things up. But have you ever stopped to think that this practice may be costing you much more than it's worth? There is no doubt that a tidy farm or plantation is pleasing to the eye, but is it more pleasing than the sight of birds on the wing, flushing out a suitable habitat, when the hunting season opens each fall?

Is a tidy fencerow for a few weeks in the spring more pleasing than the call of the bob white throughout the year?

You can't eat your cake and have it, too. Every fencerow that is burned reduces the amount of available nesting territory for the bobwhite quail and other ground nesting birds along with rabbits and other small four footed game. While grass will soon grow again and makes new cover in these areas, it will still be totally unsuited for the nesting of game birds.

The dead material from last years grass crop is a necessity for quail. They need it to build their nests. The new growing, green grass will not serve them, and they will be forced to move into crop fields where cultivating and harvesting will make their nesting attempts futile. Or they will move to another location where more suitable living conditions are offered them. In either case you lose your birds for the sake of a neat fencerow, or field border, for a scant few weeks in the spring.

In addition to the neat appearance of a cleanly burned fencerow, field or woodland tract, there are supposed to be other benefits derived. Many farmers and cattlemen believe that by burning the grass they will kill a great number of insects and thus protect their crops from later damage. By the same token a great many owners of trapping lands have believed for generations that the burning of dense grasses and weeds will encourage new green food plants for our fur bearing animals. Such is generally not the case. Most often the fire burns over quickly and is not hot enough to harm the insects which hibernate under the litter, or in the upper part of the soil into which the heat does not penetrate.

If your fencerow is constructed with wooden posts, these are likely to be damaged and, if dry, are likely to burn off competely. Replacing them is expensive and time consuming operation. And even a light fire is damaging to the thin coating of zinc on the lower wires of the fence. If you will examine these wires a few days after you have burned your fencerow you will find that already a great amount of rust has collected on the lower wires.

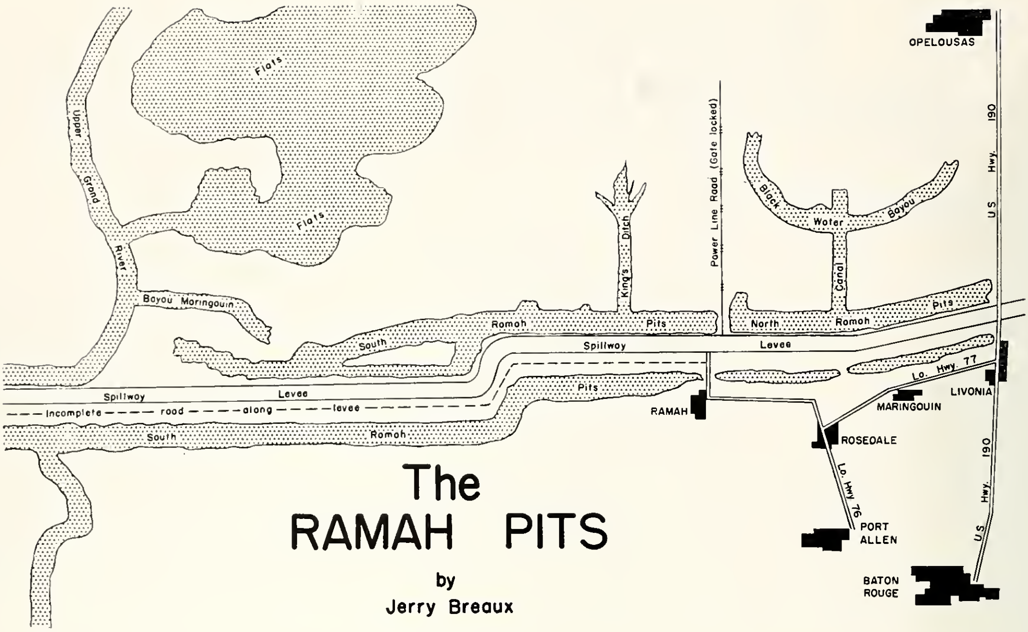
And there are other hazards and damages, too. The danger of a fire getting out of control is always of first importance. If that happens, and too often it does happen, the damage done to trees, forests and fields is fabulous with most offsetting advantages to offer an excuse for the burning.

In view of the exceedingly dubious helpful results, it seems rather obvious that unless one is willing to pay the price for the questionable qualities of a burned and barren field border, it would be much better to find some other method of tidying up the farm at this time of the year.

If the farmer is at all interested in hunting, or even in some form or other of wildlife other than game, such as insectivorous birds, he will do well to leave last years grass in payment for the enjoyment and utility it will bring to him later.

Field borders are one of the most important sources of cover for quail. In fact these borders are about all the cover that is left on many farms, and that is the major reason your quail crop diminishes steadily from year to year. If you will save that cover you will soon have more birds. By the same token if you are not adverse to a little extra labor, cutting brush and distributing it in piles around your woodlands or along your fencerows will provide some of the finest cover for rabbits and if you are a rabbit hunter as a great many country sportsmen are, you will find many very happy hours when the next hunting season rolls around.

But whether it be cover for rabbits or the bobwhite quail, you will be fulfilling your duty as a conservationist and a protector of Louisiana's game birds and animals that in the final analysis make one of the finest heritages you can hand down to your children and your grandchildren for their happy times afield, too.



The RAMAH PITS

by
Jerry Breaux

It was one of those days when fishermen had oughta stay inside. This buddy of mine and I had driven 50 miles to get to a particular borrow pit because mid day skies were overcast and it looked like we'd get a shower by the time we arrived for late fishing. A little rain would help.

The shower came all right but things didn't stop where we wanted them to. Instead, the afternoon got worse. Over on the northwest horizon it was dark and wicked looking. The black curtain wasn't moving to either side so far as we could tell but it was moving. About the time we started to fish the sky fell apart and dumped all kinds of water down on us; we found out what direction the squall was moving in. Of a sudden there were hundreds of bass drummers on the pit with us, all beating the skins with exploding rockets. Or so it seemed.

A typical view of Ramah Pits east of the levee. These are more or less land-locked and support an abundant grass line with pockets and stumps where black bass like to hang out. During early spring many anglers lean toward the spoon lures like Herb's Dilly, Hawaain Wiggler and Shimmy Wiggler pulled fast over the coon-tail grass and close by the cypress stumps.

We sat and looked at each other and I believe to this day my friend wanted me to say "let's get outta here" as bad as I wanted him to. Neither uttered this wise thing so we put on raincoats and went to casting while the thunder rolled, the lightning flashed and the rain came pelting down.

Among the good lures for these pits are the L & S Mirro-Lures of the 7-M series; they were already tied on. We were too wet and miserable to change the things even though the dancing surface of this long stretch of water didn't exactly call for a topwater plug. But the wind was carrying us along at a good clip and soon we'd be around a bend and on a calm, lee bank.

Meantime we fished. My partner sloshed a long cast up in a pocket of water grass and I watched the plug rise and fall with the waves. He gave it a twitch and a jerk and the thing disappeared, swallowed by a bass hungry enough to make a swirl and splash on that already roiled water. It was a nice fish, over two pounds!

A little later I hooked one and needless to say we never did reach that lee bank we had in mind. We fished that same section, about a city block, over and over starting up the outboard motor to re-run it when we drifted out of the action. The squall was intense for nearly a half hour and we strung up thirteen bass in the two to three pound class while it lasted. Three fish took our plugs with them when they struck then burrowed into the deep grass in mid-pit. We couldn't control the boat to ease these home.

The squall passed over and fishing stopped dead. Those banks took another two hours' beating but didn't give up a single rise.

Many an angler in Louisiana can recall a similar if not so severe fishing experience on some pit or another giving it a special niche in his memory as a natural choice when other fishing holes are "weathered out." To the well-coffee'd angler who has had such an experience there is no fishing trip more relaxing than heading in the early morning hours to his favorite black bass pit. He isn't packing a tackle box full of apprehensions about water conditions, wind, etc., which he has to take into consideration on a jaunt to a large lake, a tidal river or shed-off bayou. Thus the majority of borrow pits are not only full of fish, they're full of angler reassurance. Water will be the same tomorrow as it is today; wind from any direction and darn near any intensity doesn't necessarily spell doom to the trip because they're sheltered in grassy nests of their own by levees and woods. The only thing he has to worry about is whether the fish will bite the day he goes. And if you took that little bit of uncertainty away from fishermen about half of us wouldn't bother to go at all. It's what makes a trip worth while . . . you never know!

Fishermen within driving distance of the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers have two kinds of pits more or less at easy fishing hand—the seasonal and the year round pit. The first is restocked by annual spring rises and subject to being muddy for short periods of time as a consequence. The other is landlocked, usually nicely grassed and has its own production forces at work. On almost any pit system you'll find some of both kinds.

The Ramah Pits are double-barreled like this. Straddling that imposing levee marking the eastern limits of Atchafalaya Spillway they bring to mind a stern mother hen with a big brood of little ones scampering about her feet; only the "little ones" here represent a string of pits from Maringuoin to Bayou Sorrel—roughly twenty miles of prime fishing territory in the south-central part of the state.

As a matter of fact, the fishing potential of Ramah Pits has for years been well in advance of accommodations. It has been mainly a "rough it" proposition—right down the trail of men who still have frontier spirit and enthusiasm where the out-of-doors is concerned. Not all of us are endowed with the pioneer temperament that lets us get added pleasure out of a trip that takes us away from things. But for the lucky ones Ramah has a tremendous appeal. It has been broken in recent years but it has not been entirely tamed.

This wild aspect is not what puts Ramah on the fishing maps though. There's fishing here for all kinds of folks. The dyed-in-the-wool fly fisherman or bait caster can be perfectly content on his stretch of water while around the next bend some bank fishermen are enjoying their special kind of fun with cane poles and garden hackles.

February and March are eagerly awaited by fishermen who like the fast action provided by scrappy little striped bass which run well those days the north wind pushes tide water out. This striper fisherman is anchored a stone's throw from Ramah levee where the pits join Grand River. Small river shrimp ahead of a #2 Hildebrandt spinner gets 'em.

Kids get in on the fun too! Those clean banks along the levee are made to order for the youngster just learning the art of fly and bait casting. He can roundhouse, sidearm and backlash to his heart's content while getting the feel of his new fishing outfit. And the chances are very good he'll land a fish of some kind the first time out . . . if so, you've got another fisherman in the family.

The hubs of this fishing neighborhood are the town of Maringuoin out of which lie the north Ramah pits and the settlement of Ramah, jumping off place for all points south. Eating and sleeping accommodations for extended trips are available in Maringuoin and Rosedale with new tourist cabins at Ramah.

Because of its proximity Ramah Pits attract many fishermen from Baton Rouge, Port Allen, Plaquemine and other towns along the Mississippi River. The usual route from east points is via the Port Allen-Rosedale road, newly black-topped, Hwy. 76. Approaching from the west out of Opelousas, Port Barre. Krotz Springs, etc., the popular route is south on Hwy. 77 which crosses Hwy. 190 at Livonia. This road follows twisting Bayou Grosse Tete into Maringuoin and Rosedale.

Boat rental services are limited so most fishermen bring their own rigs. Small boats and motors are best because water is shallow and launching is a problem for heavy outfits in spite of a few fairly good launching sites. The man with a light rig can put in anywhere along the levee, driving right to the water's edge provided, of course, weather is fair and the dirt road atop the levee is passable. After heavy rains regular car traffic is out of the question on lower Ramah. However, among the more welcome changes in the Ramah Pit complexion is the new, all-weather road being constructed on the

Emile Bonnecaze of Baton Rouge is only one of many anglers in Louisiana who regularly bring nice fish home from the pits. These beauties were taken on south Ramah. Note Jeep in the background, the angler's true friend during wet spells when the dirt road is turned into the world's stickiest gumbo. The new road will open up new fishing areas for everybody.

east apron of the levee all the way to Bayou Sorrel. It should be ready by late summer this year.

Black bass fishermen will be especially thankful for this new road; since pit bass seem to be more active after a rain it will give them access to some fishing water that has the provoking way of being best when they couldn't get there by car. For instance, the pits near Grand River, ten miles from Ramah, are excellent for bass. They're out of the flooding influence on the east side of the levee yet open to freshening by tidal rise and fall of Grand River. These pits are very weedy, grow a lot of coon-tail grass—fine fishing with flies or surface lures of both the spoon and plug variety. Then during February and March the pit and river converging point is a hot spot for striped bass fishermen who come in from Miller's Landing at Bayou Plaquemine as well as from Ramah.

Pits west of the levee are seasonal for the most part, taking backwater from the Atchafalaya River each spring and giving the angler new crops of fish to harvest as his skill allows. When water is high and slack it clears fast. Fishing is good along the levee banks among the fields of cockle-burrs and scattered buttonwood trees.

Another stage we watch for is the week or so when the swamps are nearly drained and water is moving out of the woods into the main pits through small sloughs and other low places in the bank. At these mixing points Pico Perch and Hell Diver casters have themselves quite a time.

If trolling is your dish you'll find yourself in hog's heaven with miles and miles of varying depth pits to mosey over. Pico Perch and Sonics are among the top trollers as well as for ordinary casting. They run shallower than say the Whopper canal. However, along the miles of this circling bayou are many misleading side sloughs making navigation risky to say Stopper or Go-Deeper River Runts and don't dig mud or hang up on the many stumps lacing the pit bottom below King's Ditch.

Still others like their fishing back in the bayous. North of the power line is an oil rig canal leading back to Blackwater Bayou. This is strictly a wild and wooly one making a rough circle deep in the swamp, eventually coming back into the the least. Most are wisely content to fish only parts of Blackwater Bayou.

Moving south again there is King's Ditch likewise going back in the swamps and offering fair to middlin' black bass fishing when water is up. Then there's Brown's Bayou, Bayou Maringuoin and the Grand River Flats which are just about as away from everything as you can get. Actually the Flats are a series of dead swamp bottoms off upper Grand River in the old Alligator Bay region. They're low enough to hold water all the time and reached by boat through a cut-off a half-mile above Grand River Landing. Going through the cut one is confronted with something new and unusual in Louisiana fishing scenery. It is immense! Dead and live cypress trees are scattered all about with here and there patches of buttonwoods and small willow islands. Three huge basins make up the Flats which normally are too shallow for motoring except through the connecting channels. All in all it looks like a first class place for a bass fisherman to get himself lost in. And it is! The channels linking the basins together are not marked so it's a good idea not to venture too far into them without someone along who's familiar with the country. And travel slow after you leave the obvious main channel. There are probably more busted props in there than there are words on this page.

It is a project to reach them but there is beautiful fishing waiting for you in the Flats. They cap off the Ramah fishing picture which can be soothing as a summer breeze or as harsh and involved as a house of mirrors, however, a man likes it.

On a balmy Sunday afternoon you can make an acquaintance with both kinds of fishermen—those who like to rough it, those who prefer to take it easy. Driving down the levee road you'll notice some drifting with the current or wind, working the pockets with artificial lures. A little farther down there'll be a boat load of cane polers tied to a stump or fallen willow tree catching sac-a-lait; while still farther, maybe around Patty-U-Bend another runs a trot-line set for catfish.

Meanwhile, out of sight at the end of some bayou a pair of anglers of hardier stock may be rassling their boat over a log jam or sliding it over mud to get to a little secluded hole in the swamp to swap ends with black bass that have never seen a plug before.

But above all, here's a place a man can take his whole family for a picnic or fishing outing if they'd just as soon look at the water and turtles on the logs as fish in it. It's safe, convenient and any piece of levee ground can be converted into his own personal picnic ground for a day. There is a grass-matted playground for the kiddies to romp on and a sloping bank to water with fish in it just in case someone wants to wet a line.

DEAD GOOSE?

An Oshkosh, Wisconsin, waterfowler tossed a goose he had just shot into his car trunk and drove off to display it to his friends.

He had the surprise of his life when he opened the trunk and the dead goose honked once and flew away.

PLUM DRUNK

A Kentucky farmer was worried about the fish in his pond because they acted strangely.

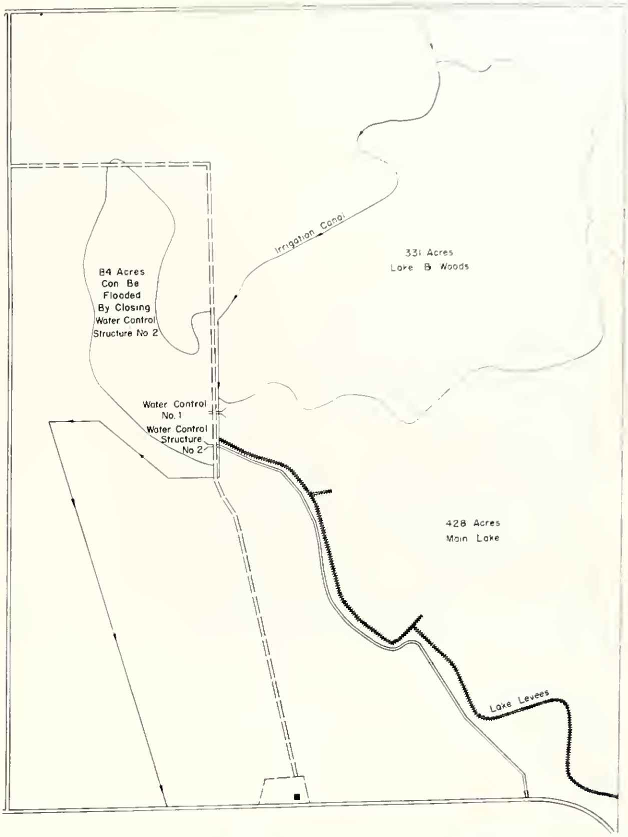
He had dumped ten baskets of plums into the water. He said the fruit fermented the water and the fish were "plum" drunk. Could be!

Wild Life is a Farm Crop

By

James G. Guillory

Work Unit Conservationist
Soil Conservation Service



Drawing showing how water-control system operated to keep the lake full for the benefit of ducks and other waterfowl. Eighty-four acres of 150-acre rice field at left can be flooded from the lake. Remainder is flooded by pumps, if needed.

Give wildlife a break when you're planning your farming operations. It pays.

That's the advice of Harvey Adams, who manages the 3,700-acre rice farm of his grandfather, Onezie Vincent, 86-year-old pioneer of Allen Parish.

An important landmark on the farm is a lake that covers 750 acres, including a wooded area. When the lake is full, it provides around 600 acres of open water. Ducks flock there by the thousands and many species nest along its edges.

"You should see this lake in the spring, after the hunting season, when it's full of ducks," Adams says. "It's a truly beautiful sight."

But a major problem has been that in order to drain an adjoining 150-acre rice field for planting and harvesting the crop, it was necessary to drain the lake to get the water off the rice field. That meant that for a good part of the year there was little or no water in the lake.

As far as rice production was concerned, this made little difference. But from the standpoint of wildlife, it was a vital consideration. Adams doesn't fish or hunt. But to him, a flock of ducks settling on the lake at sunset is as pretty a sight any day as a waving field of golden rice, ready for harvest.

So Adams decided to see what he could do to avoid draining the lake. He asked the help of the Soil Conservation Service, through the local Grand Coteau Ridge Soil Conservation District. John Tubbs, SCS engineer at Crowley, joined Adams and me to look the situation over. After a careful engineering survey, Tubbs and I came up with a workable solution.

What was needed, Tubbs explained, was a system of controls that would make it possible to keep the water in the lake at maximum level and at the same time to regulate the water in the rice field as desired. This involved designing two water control structures, which Adams put in according to detailed engineering plans and specifications provided by Tubbs.

Structure No. 1, when open, permits water to flow freely between the lake and the rice field. When the lake is full, it will flood 84 acres of the 150-acre field. The flow in either direction can be controlled by placing baffle boards in the structure at any desired height.

Structure No. 2 opens into a ditch, constructed to provide a detour around the lake. When structure No. 1 is closed and structure No. 2 is open, the rice field can be drained while the water in the lake is held at maximum level.

If water in the lake is low, as during prolonged drought, the procedure can be reversed. Water from the rice field can be drained into the lake by closing structure No. 2 and opening structure No. 1.

The two structures thus provide complete water control. They permit water in the lake to be held at the desired height at all times for the benefit of wildlife. They also provide effective regulation of water for planting, growing, and harvesting rice in the adjoining field.

Heretofore, because of the necessity for draining the lake to let the water off the rice field, water was not available from the lake for irrigating other crops. So an added benefit of the water-control system is that it makes it possible to use water from the lake for irrigation when needed.

As a part of the system, a 12-inch corregated pipe has been installed to conduct water from the lake for irrigating other cropland. As it leaves the lake, the pipe crosses the drainage ditch from structure No. 2 as an "overpass."

Water for irrigation is also available from four wells, two of 12-inch and two of 10-inch capacity. But Adams prefers to use water from the lake, when plenty is available, because this makes it possible to take advantage of the dissolved fertilizer elements in water which drains into the lake from the surrounding cropland, he points out.

Adams is a great admirer of the ability of his grandfather, who acquired his present land holdings with energy and foresight as his only assets. When Mr. Vincent left his home at Kaplan, south of Crowley, as a young man, his first job was as a canal guard, mounted on horseback.

With savings from his meager salary, he bought a small tract of land and planted cotton. He and his wife "lived poor," even making their own soap, and producing most of their food in a small garden. As they accumulated a little money, they used it as a down payment to buy more land.

Finally, he heard about the land in the present rice plantation, which was owned by Bell Lumber Company. It was cutover timberland, for the most part, and he bought it 30 years ago at from $3 to $7 an acre, by mortgaging everything he had. He put up two sawmills to cut the remaining timber, from which he built his house and barns.

As rapidly as he could, he brought the land into cultivation and planted it to rice. At the peak of his production he had 2,500 acres of rice land, planting half of it each year and letting the other half rest a year. Under present rice quotas, Adams plants 720 acres of rice each year. He rotates the rice land with pasture.

Mr. Vincent built the lake about five years after he bought the land. He ran the contour lines for the levees by eye with amazing accuracy.

Actualy, he has already turned over ownership of the land to Adams and three other grandchildren, in equal shares. Adams serves as manager without salary, except for his one-fourth share of the farm income, because, he says laughingly, "If I got a salary, the others could tell me what to do."

Adams has operated the farm for the past three years in accordance with a soil conservation district plan, of which the water management feature is a part. Under the soil and water conservation program, and Adams' careful management, crop yields have shown a substantial increase.

Percy Monceaux, one of the tenants, was so discouraged three years ago, Adams reports, that he was on the verge of giving up farming. Last year he averaged 25 barrels of rice per acre on the 285 acres he farms. For the farm as a whole,

The 150-acre rice field adjoining the lake. Draining this area presented the problem that was solved by the water-control system. Seen in the picture are Adams, at left, and the author.

View of part of the 600-acre lake during extremely dry fall of 1956. Levee in background shows the level to which water rises when the lake is full.

yields averaged 20 barrels. "We're hoping eventually to hit 30 barrels," Adams says confidently.

Adams attended Southwest Louisiana Institute, where he studied agriculture. Later, deciding to teach, he changed to history and education. But after serving in the navy, he went into cattle raising on his mother's farm, only to find this was a dull and "boring" occupation, he says.

There's nothing boring, though, about managing a 3,700-acre rice plantation. One of the most challenging phases of the job is making the best use of all the soil and water resources in a coordinated farm management program. And Adams believes that managing these resources for the benefit of wildlife as well as for crop production is an essential part of good farming operations.

Adams is a Scoutmaster and one of the things his Scout troop enjoys most of all is hunting squirrels on his farm. Recently he was considering whether to clear out an area of hardwoods. He decided against it, because it might have an adverse effect on the squirrel population. Leaving an area where Scouts can hunt is good land use too, he believes.

Adams likes to quote his grandfather as saying, "Work is a blessing if it's something you like to do." And one of the reasons he likes his job so much, you conclude, is because of the opportunity it gives him for promoting conditions favorable for wildlife, along with his farming operations.

For even though he doesn't care about hunting or fishing, he's an ardent wildlife man. He thinks it's the duty of every farmer to help wildlife overcome the increasing hazards of modern civilization. And local soil conservation districts, he points out, can provide technical help in doing the job.

In the final analysis, Adams is convinced, whether wildlife survives or vanishes in the years ahead depends largely on the attitude of farmers—the people who own and manage our soil and water resources on which our wildlife resources depend.

Louisiana's Wild Life Restoration Funds Increased

The largest amount of federal funds ever appropriated for wildlife conservation work annually is now available for use according to the federal aid section of the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries commission.

Under the Pittman-Robertson federal aid in wildlife restoration program, initiated in the late 1930's, excise taxes on the sales of sporting fire arms and ammunition provides money to be allocated to the states for restoration work. Prior to 1948, income from excise tax revenues exceeded the amounts allocated, thereby building up a sizeable backlog of funds. In 1955 the government was authorized to make the blacklog available to the states in five equal annual installments in addition to the regular annual allocations.

In order to obtain their full share, the states must match available federal funds with a 25-percent appropriation from their own budgets. For instance, if Louisiana plans a $100,000 conservation project, $75,000 would be provided from Pittman-Robertson funds and the state appropriates $25,000 of its own money. Federal approval of the project is necessary.

Louisiana's share of the annual increase is $45,250.92 per year for the next five years. This makes a total of $268,480.05 of Pittman-Robertson funds available to Louisiana for the 1956-57 fiscal year.

The allocation of funds is based on the total number of hunting licenses sold in the state and the state's total land acreage.

Wild Life Commission Leases Wisner Tract For Public Shooting Ground

By
Steve Harmon

A 30,000-acre marshland area between Leeville and Grand Isle, known as the Wisner tract, has been leased by the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries commission for the purpose of developing it into a waterfowl public shooting ground. The lease, entered into with the City of New Orleans, is for a ten year period with option to renew.

The action to develop and operate the huge Wisner tract was approved by the commission at its regular January meeting.

Plans to open the area for waterfowl shooting during the 1957-58 season are already underway and boundary lines will be surveyed and established in March.

The federal aid section of the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries commission, which has been charged with the responsibility of developing and operating the large tract, has submitted a preliminary project statement to the regional office of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for approval. Under federal participation, the government would pay three-fourths of the lease, operation and development cost.

Although the entire area has not been completly surveyed as to the total need for control structures, sufficient dams will be erected to stabilize water levels and maintain the water in a brackish condition which will be favorable toward the production of duck food. In this way, commission biologists point out, the entire Wisner tract can be changed from a marginal waterfowl habitat to an excellent waterfowl area. A portion of the control structures scheduled to be built can be seen on the area map.

John Newsom, federal aid coordinator of the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries commission, says that after the land is finally acquired, development and operation of the tract will begin immediately and regardless of how many of the dams are constructed this year, the area will be opened to the general public for waterfowl shooting next hunting season.

The opening of the Wisner tract to the general public will effect the shooting on other marshland areas as it will provide more shooting pressure in the marshes where thousands of acres presently are in the hands of private hunting clubs, large landowners, and fur trappers.

The ideal feature of the Wisner tract is that it is located on both sides of Louisiana highway 620 and easily accessible by automobile. Then too, the commission points out, there are no plans for controlled hunting as is the case of the Pass-a-Loutre public shooting grounds at the mouth of the Mississipi river.

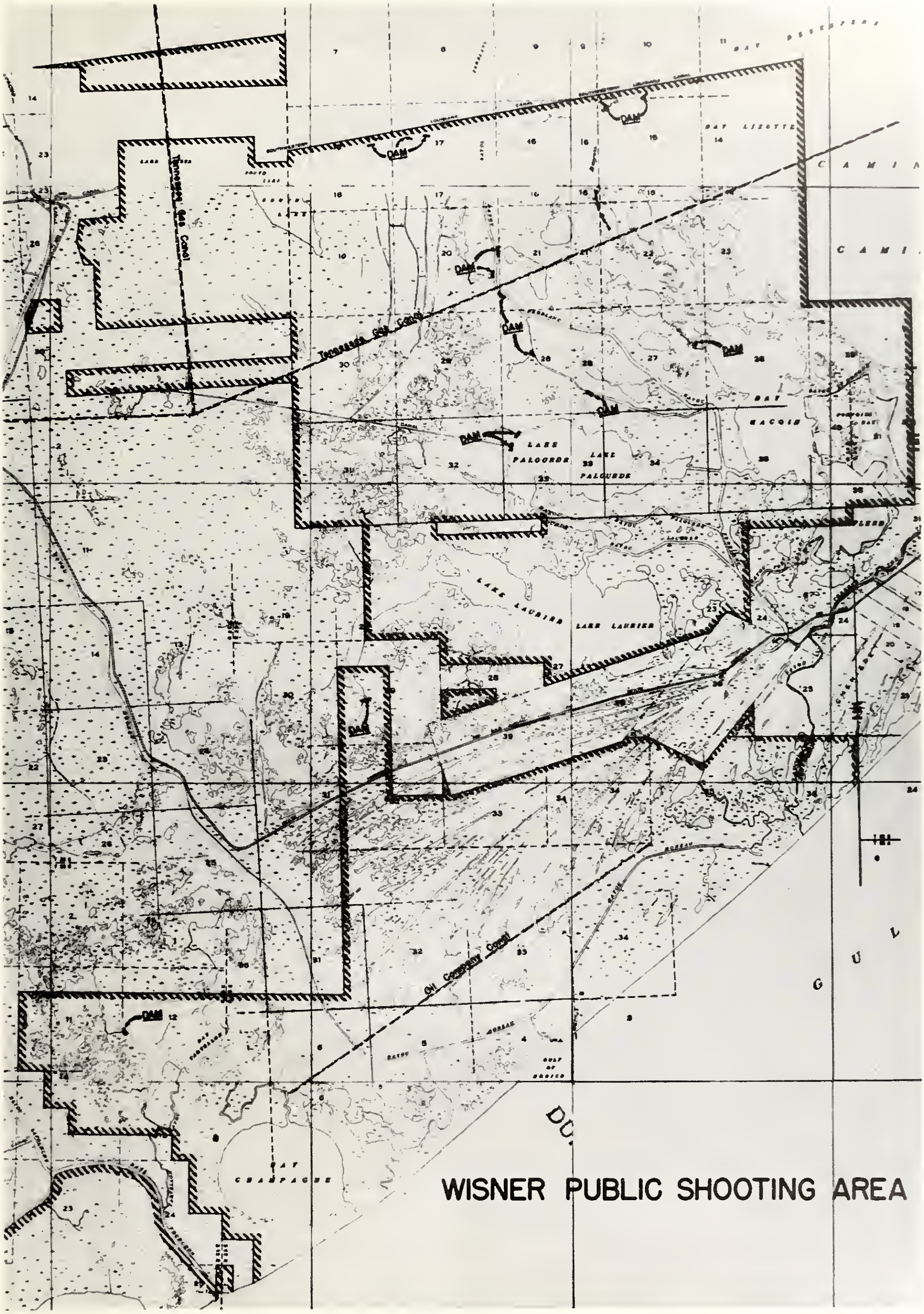
The desirability of this tract is exemplified by its easy access by the main paved highway between Leeville and Grand Isle and the many small canals and ditches that meander through the great amount of this acreage.

The past few weeks have provided definite proof to the residents along Bayou Lafourche that this tract can be a highly productive public shooting ground. For several weeks now, thousands of blue geese have been concentrated below Golden Meadow in terrain almost identical to the Wisner tract and in close proximity, feeding on the three-cornered grass in that area that has normally supplied the major food for the muskrat and in which the blue geese have a peculiar affinity.

Since none of the Wisner tract is to be under controlled hunting supervision, as is the case of the Pass-A-Loutre public shooting grounds, there will be nothing to prevent hunters from arranging their own blinds for their convenience. Of course, keeping in mind the fact that the entire area is a public shooting ground and no one is privileged to erect a private or posted blind to be used only by himself.

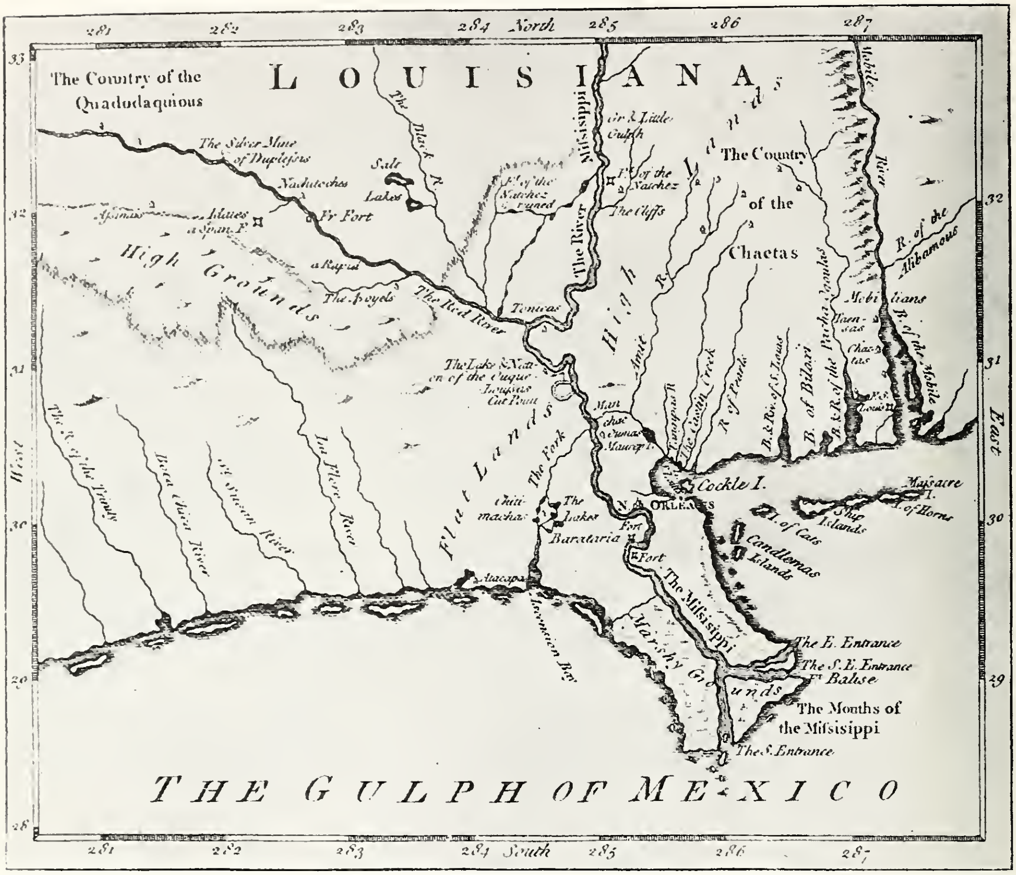
The people in the Bayou Lafourche area, from Donaldsonville to Leeville, have not had too good a waterfowl hunting spot since storms and other factors have created a terrific salt water intrusion which, of course, have eliminated all the foods for waterfowl and much of the fresh water they need along with the brackish.

It is hoped that the leasing of the marshy Wisner tract will fill a needed gap in waterfowl hunting next hunting season and for many such seasons in the future for the growing number of Louisiana waterfowlers.



WISNER PUBLIC SHOOTING AREA

Louisiana's First Conservationist



Two hundred years ago historian-naturalist Simon Le Page Du Pratz drew this map of the lower Mississippi and the lands of the Attakapas and the Choctaws. Fort La Balise, now since swallowed by the river, was then bidding to outstrip New Orleans. The Chandeleurs were then called the Candlemas Islands.

By
Ednard Waldo

No avalanche of honors has been heaped upon Antoine Simon Le Page Du Pratz, Louisiana's early naturalist, yet three small volumes he left to posterity tell a tale of a man's unquenchable curiosity about a new land and all the strange animals, trees, insects and peoples that abounded there.

In the intrepid Dutchman's work, which he entitled "Historie de la Louisiane" and published in Paris in 1758, he emerges from this treasure house of quaint engravings of birds, beasts, flowers, trees, fish, deer, Indian buffalo hunts and maps, not only as an historian of the early aborigines' and the white man's conquests, but also as an explorer and first advocate of conservation.

The volumes, later translated into English, tell of the sixteen years Du Pratz spent in the Louisiana territory 1718-1734. His is the fascinating story of the life he lived on the banks of Bayou St. John and of leaving there to dwell among the Indians of the Natchez tribe. From there, a lone white man, with only the Natchez guides as companions, he ventured hundred of leagues on trips through unknown and hostile territory into the lands of the Chickasaws and across the Mississippi into the buffalo plains.

No branch of natural history escaped Du Pratz' searching eyes. He sketched and took notes on almost everything new that he saw including the flora and fauna and the natives, their manners, customs, languages, religious ceremonies and even the manner in which they brought up their children. Sometimes alone he wandered through the dense forests digging, collecting specimens and securing complete data for his works.

Unfortunately Du Pratz has no biographer. However, from his narrative we gather that he must have been a man of great charm, bravery and persuasion, for wherever he went he seemed to gain the confidence of the natives and he was often called upon to act as arbitrator in their disputes with the French.

Like most voyagers, Du Pratz was overawed by the abundance of game and by the tales he was told by other compatriots, one of whom reported of his expedition into the lands of the Paducas, "On our march we saw the meadows covered almost entirely with buffalo, elk and deer; so much so that one could scarce distinguish the different herds, so intermixed were they." Du Pratz was enthused, "I longed to kill a buffalo with my own hand, therefore I told my people, (his indians) my intention to kill one of the first herd we should pass, nor did a day pass in which we did not see several herds." (Du Pratz was then on a long journey into the wilderness accompanied only by indian guides).

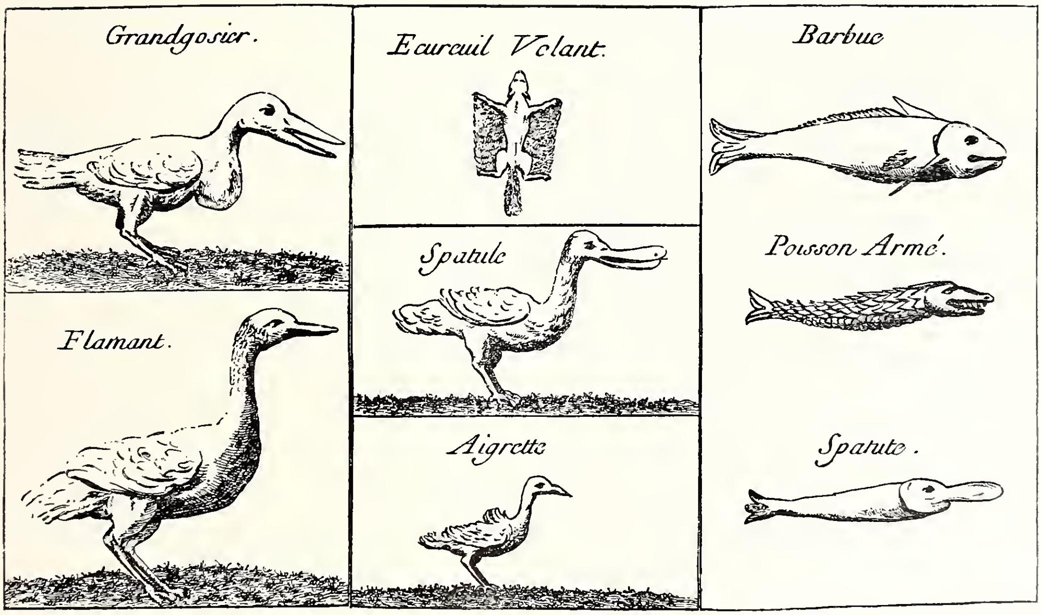
"One morning we espied a herd of upwards of two hundred. The wind stood as I could have wished, blowing in our faces and coming from the herd, which is a great advantage in this way: because when the wind blows from you toward the buffalo, they come to scent you and run away before you can come within gunshot of them. Whereas, when the wind blows from them to you, they do not run until they can distinguish you by sight. Another thing which greatly favors your coming very near them is that the curled hair which falls down between their horns is so bushy that it confuses their sight. In this manner I came within full gun-sight of them, pitched upon one of the fattest, shot him at the extremity of the shoulder, and brought him down stone dead. The natives stood looking on, were ready to fire, had I happened to wound him only slightly, for in that case these animals are apt to turn upon the hunter and thus wound him.

Upon seeing the buffalo fall dead and the rest take flight, the natives told me with a smile, "You kill the males, do you intend to take tallow?" (Up to this time the indians killed the males only for the tallow, their meat was considered unsavory) I answered that I did it on purpose to show them the manner of making good meat though a male. I caused the animal to be drawn immediately on the spot. The bunch, tongue and chines to be cut out, one of the chines to be lain on the coals, of which I made all of them taste. They all agreed the meat was juicy and of an exquisite flavor.

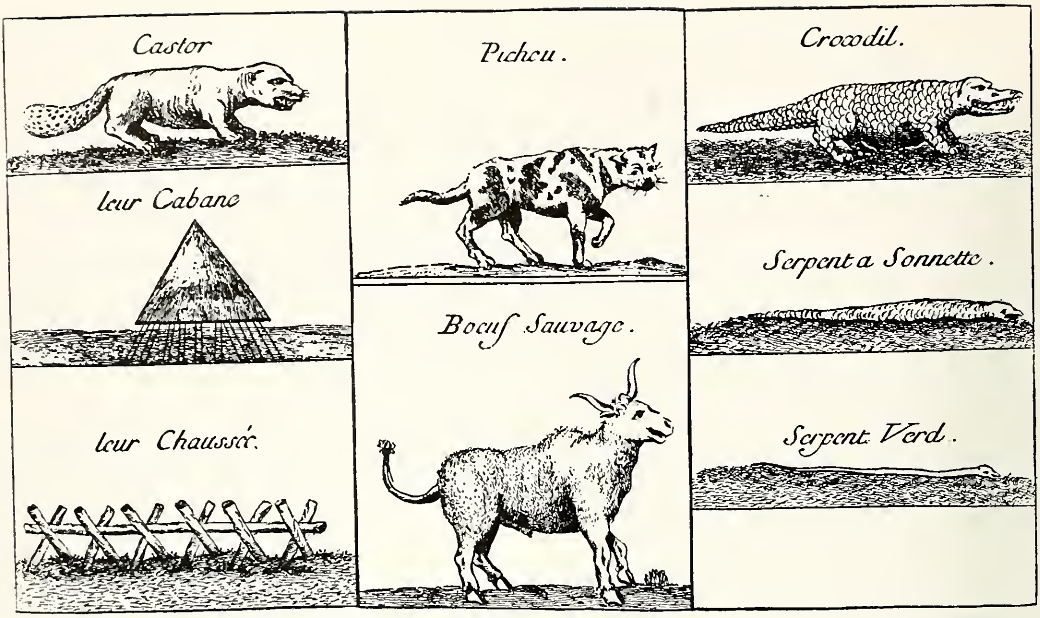
I then took occasion to remonstrate to them that, if instead of killing the cows, as was always their custom, they killed the bulls, the different in point of profit would be very considerable; as, for instance, a good commerce with the French in tallow with which the bulls abound; that bulls' flesh is far more delicate and tender than cow's; and a third advantage is the selling of the skins at a higher rate, as being much better than the cows and finally that this kind of game that is so advantageous to the country would thereby escape being quite destroyed; whereas by killing the cows the breed of these animals is greatly impaired.

Besides preaching conservation to the indians, Du Pratz concocted what may have been Louisiana's first beef soup and bouilli. He says, "I made a soup that was of exquisite flavor, but somewhat fat, the broth boiled down from the marrowed bones of this buffalo, the rest of the broth serving to make a maiz gruel, called Sagamity, which to my taste surpassed the best dish in France. The 'bunch' (he evidently referred to brisket) would have graced the table of a prince."

On this voyage he met with many tribes of indians who expressed surprise at a white man travelling so far from home accompanied only by natives. Du Pratz crossed and re-crossed the Mississippi observing the nature of the lands and the animals, birds and plants. At one spot he spent several days



Grandgoiser the Pelican's chest seems to have slipped in this sketch by Du Pratz (upper left). The flamant or Flamingo is depicted below and to the right the Spatule, or spoonbill duck and the Aigrette were among the numberless waterfowl seen on the Mississippi. The Ecureuil Volant, flying squirrel, the Barbue, catfish; Poisson Armé, Alligator Gar and the Spatule, spoonbill catfish are among his quaint illustrations.


Castor
leur Cabane
leur Chaussée.
Picheu.
Boeuf Sauvage.
Crocodil.
Serpent a Sonnette.
Serpent Verd.

Castor, the beaver, (above left) appears to be a horrendous character, however, quite an engineer as Du Pratz' sketches of his home and foundations for his dams show. Picheu, the wildcat (top center) resembles a hyena and Boef Sauvage, the buffalo resembles a Brahma bull. His crocodil, alligator; serpent a sonnette, or rattlesnake and Serpent Verd are seen at the right.

observing "Castor" the beaver and making quaint sketches seen in his works.

Du Pratz wasn't very enthusiastic over the prowess of the "Terrible Maranguin" (the mosquito) that dread parasite the tales of whose "savagery" no doubt kept many timid settler from our shores. To read many accounts of the swarms of blood sucking insects by early chronoclers one would have sympathy with the prospective settler who stayed away from Louisiana for fear of them. Du Pratz seems to have taken this paranha of the air in stride in his accounts of our native insect population. "The moskitos," as he called them, "are famous all over America, for their multitude and troublesomeness of their buzzing and the venom of their stings, which occasion an insupportable itching, and often form so many ulcers, if the person stung does not immediately put some spittle on the wound. In open places they are less tormenting, but still they are troublesome and the best way of driving them out of the house is to burn a little brimstone in the morning and evenings. The smoke of this infallibly kills them and the smoke keeps them away for several days."

"The Choctaws are the only ugly people among all the nations of Louisiana, (Du Pratz undoubtedly included B.O. in this description). This is chiefly owing to the fat with which they rub their skin and their hair and to the manner of defending themselves against the moskitos, which they keep off by lighting fires of fir wood and standing in the smoke." But if the mosquito wasn't to scare off the traveler, Du Pratz' spider might certainly have. He relates, "Among the spiders that appear in Louisiana there is one kind that will appear very extraordinary, it is large and rather longer than a pigeon's egg, black with gold colored spots, its claws are pierced through the joints. It lodges itself in a kind of silken sack hung among the branches of the trees. The web this insect weaves is so strong, that it not only stops birds, but cannot even be broken by men without considerable effort.

Du Pratz does not seem to have shared the opinion of other voyagers as to the menace of the alligator, he refers to as the Crocodil. His first encounter with the crocodil on Bayou St. John shortly after he had settled there. Du Pratz relates, "It was almost night, when my slave perceived, within two yards of the fire, a young crocodil, five feet long, which beheld the fire without moving. I was in my garden hard by when she made me repeated signs to come to her. I ran with speed and upon my arrival she showed me the crocodil and I could see that its eyes were fixed upon the fire and that he could not take them off it. I ran into my cabin to look for my gun, as I am a pretty good marksman, but what was my surprise when I came out and found the girl with a great stick in her hand attacking the monster! But she made me understand by signs that there was no occasion for a gun to kill such a beast for the stick she showed me was sufficient for the purpose."

Later while on his voyage to settle with the Natchez, Du Pratz says, "Among other things I cannot omit to give an account of is a monstrous large crocodil I killed with a musket ball as it lay upon the bank about ten feet above the edge of the water. We measured it and found it to be nineteen feet long, its head three feet and a half long and above two feet nine inches broad and the other parts in proportion. The belly was two feet two inches thick and it infested the whole air with the odor of musk. My companion told me he had killed one twenty-two feet long."

"I shall not contradict the accounts of venerable anti-quity about the crocodiles of the Nile who fall upon men and devour them; who cross the roads to make a very slippery path upon them to trip passengers and make them slide into the river and who counterfeit the voice of an infant to draw children into their snares — but as I profess to speak the truth from my own knowledge I may safely affirm the crocodiles of Louisiana are doubtless another species than those of other countries. It is true that they attack man in the water, but not on land where they are not at all formidable. The water is their favorite element and it is there they are dangerous, in that case it is easy to guard against them."

Whereas Du Pratz was concerned for the preservation of the buffalo he was all out for the control of the now extinct passenger pigeon whose flocks in migration literally darkened the skies for days at a time. "The wood pigeons (passenger pigeons) are seen in such prodigious numbers that I do not fear to exaggerate when I affirm that they sometimes cloud the sun. One day on the banks of the Mississippi I met with a flock of them that was so large that before they all passed I had leisure to fire with the same gun four times at them. (This was a muzzle loader). But they were flying so fast that, although I am a good shot I only hit two of them with four shots.

"I shall here give an instance of the prodigious number of these birds," Du Pratz says, "and also of their singular instinct. In one of my journeys when I happened to be upon the bank of a river, I heard a confused noise which seemed to come along the river from a considerable distance below us. As the sound continued uniformally I embarked as fast as I could on board my large pettyagure, with four other men and steered down the river, keeping in the middle that I might be on any side that best suited me. But how great was my surprise when I approached the place from whence the noise came and observed it to proceed from a thick short pillar on the bank of the river. When I drew still nearer to it, I perceived that the pillar was formed by a legion of pigeons, who kept continually flying up and down successively among the branches of evergreen oaks in order to beat down the acorns with their wings. Every now and then some alighted to eat acorns which they themselves or the others had beat down: for all they acted in common and eat in common: no avarice nor private interest appearing among them, but each laboring for the rest as much as himself."

"These birds come to Louisiana only in the winter and remain in Canada in the summer where they devour the corn as they do the acorns in Louisiana." Du Pratz suggested burning brimstone at night under the roosting places of the pigeons and gathering the kill in sacks. They were too numerous to be controlled by shooting, he observed. Market hunters adopted similar tactics a century later and helped exterminate this bird. The last specimen seen alive died in a zoo in 1913.

Besides taking the hardships of life in the wilderness with seeming indifference Du Pratz was sometimes interruped in his studies by outside influences. Having once been a Dragoon in the French Army in the German wars, the French gave him a command in an indian war. Du Pratz conducted hostilities and the peace with credit and went on with his travels and studies. He found time to catalogue the properties of indian medicinal herbs and sent 300 samples home and who knows that some are not still being used in France to this day. Once he ran afoul of Governor Bienville and came out best in this argument.

Du Pratz was certainly no Audubon with pen and pencil. Quaint is the word for his sketches. His drawing of "Castor" the beaver would scare anyone. His wild buffalo resembles a barnyard bull, the pelican's pouch is seen hanging from its chest and the spoon bill duck is all bill. Perhaps Du Pratz was putting his idea across by over emphasis and maybe this is the clue as to how he crowded so much into three small volumes. Despite the aforementioned, which is not meant as a criticism. Du Pratz is recognized as an authority consulted by all who have written on the early history of New Orleans and the Louisiana province.

Until two years ago Du Pratz' works seemed surely doomed to obscurity from the English speaking world. The limited English translations published almost two centuries ago had almost disappeared from the shelves of libraries. However, New Orleans bibliophile J. S. W. Harmanson with the aid of historian Stanley C. Arthur re-published the English edition and in it incorporated all of Du Pratz quaint engravings taken from the original edition. In this one volume no attempt has been made to change Du Pratz phraseology or spelling with only one minor exception. So now once more Du Pratz fascinating work is back on the bookshelves, we hope, permanently.

Nobody knows what Du Pratz looked like because no sketch of him is known to exist. He probably died in France and no one knows where he is buried. But his little tales of the buffalo and the indian, passenger pigeon and the great hordes of wildlife of his beloved Louisiana that he left to us as a heritage will live for years and years for those who seek adventure in the pages of the past.

Carl Toler, top left, of Natchitoches with eight-point buck he bagged in Tensas parish during the past hunting season. Standing at right is Mercer Dunn. Kneeling, left to right, is Red Miller and Bill Shaw.

IF LOOKS COULD KILL

Turkey hunting can be dangerous. At least that's the word from a Miami, Florida business man.

It seems he was hit in the back of the neck by a load of birdshot. The man who shot him said he looked like a turkey. The mistaken marksman said that the Miami man's head looked just like a turkey, especially with a red hunting cap on.

The victim had some recourse though. He received $7500 in damages even though his pride was somewhat shaken.

In Ardmore, Oklahoma, Herman Jackson told officers he was shot in the chest by his own gun when his dog stepped on the trigger of the gun in the back seat of his car.

OPEN SEASON ON THE CROW

By

W. C. Goins

It's always open season on crows and that's how you can sharpen up your aim for the game hunting season. Crow hunting is a lot of fun and is the best test of the hunters' marksmanship, endurance and ingenuity because while crows are plentiful they are just about as hard to get at as anything. Having the know how in outwitting a crow gives about the most satisfaction a hunter can experience when he's not after real eating game.

There's always a question to be answered as to why there is no law against hunting the crow, and there are several good arguments in favor of his usefulness as a destroyer of insects and "general cleanup man" for small carrion. On the other hand the anti-crows maintain that because of his depredations on the farms, and his proclivity for increasing in numbers despite the all-out hunt for him, he is always there to cause damage.

If an actual census could be taken of all the crows in the country it would probably be found that there are more here now than there were when our first settlers disembarked at Plymouth Rock. Unfortunately this cannot be said of any other species of our wild birds.

Henry Ward Beecher once said that "if men were endowed with feathers and wings, very few of them would be crows." This is quite a tribute to the intelligence of this bird who is further endowed with a remarkable resistance to disease. No important epidemic has ever been known to thin them out and they overpopulate very rapidly.

Not only can the crow do more mischief in a corn field than the proverbial monkey with a barrel of coconuts, but he also causes just about the most damage possible to the nests of wild birds by eating their young and eggs. Around the farm the crow, who is adept at accustoming himself to the household habits of the farm family, will get into practically everything he can get hold of. Chicken eggs and biddies to say nothing of the family's melon patch, are favorites of the crow.

There are two kinds of crow hunting. The hunt around the big roosts sometimes numbering as many as 50,000 birds and the small farm shooting where the hunter goes after the small flocks which are usually hatched and bred in the proximity of the average sized farm.

To set the scene for the latter type of hunting, the hunters arrange for permission for several small-farm owners to hunt over a wide range. This idea the farmers usually welcome and thereby the hunters can roam from field to field and from wooded areas to wooded areas without interference.

When the crows come in, the concealed hunters follow with the rally call.

In hunting the small flock one must have a good crow call, you can get them at your sporting goods store, and enlist the aid of someone to show you how to use the call. The crows have a language, believe it or not, and when you learn their particular calls you are on your way to enjoying a sport that gives vent to any man's stalking instinct.

The calls of the crow are distinct and readily recognized from one another after one has listened to the CAWS. Try listening to these and see how by imitating them on your crow call can be put to use.

When approaching a flock of crows listen for the warning signal of the sentinel crow who is on the lookout while the others eat. You will first hear him sound a "ca-ca" and then fly away with his buddies sounding a "ca-ca-caw-caw-caw". You won't have to practice this one on your call because if you sound it you won't get any crows.

The two best crow getting calls are the fighting call which goes "cawrrr-rr-crr-rrrr-rr-caw-rrr-rr-cawrrr-rr", the other is the crow rally call which is six short "ca-ca-ca-ca-ca-ca" notes.

First find the crow's nest and drive her away bringing her down before she can issue a warning call if possible. Then start sounding the fighting call in steady sequence as long as your breath will hold out and in the meantime, find some brush or cover to hide in. This repeated call will bring in some crows to investigate the trouble in the nest. When the crows come in and are flying around follow with the rally call. When the investigators gather round above you let go at them before they realize what has happened.

The twelve-gauge shotgun is probably the best for crows with No. 6 shot and of course the repeating type is the best. However, it's hard to prescribe for the hunter when it comes to a gun since we all have our preferences.

Besides the crow calls, most large sporting goods stores handle dummy owl and crow decoys. Crow's just naturally hate owls and take a delight in tormenting them. When they find an owl they will invariably set upon it and annoy it by pecking out as many feathers as they can and seem to take a great satisfaction when the owl beats a retreat. Because of the fact that they never have been known to kill owls we may chalk this owl baiting up as another proof of the crow's perverseness.

The best place to set the owl decoy and the dummy crows is near the edge of a clearing. Set the owl in a tree with the crows around and then start sounding the "fighting" and "rally" calls. The crows will think that other crows have found an owl and come in to join the fun. Meanwhile you have stationed yourself in the brush and good shooting results. The decoys may be removed to another spot a mile or so further and the same performance repeated. The rally and the fighting calls may also be employed to good advantage if the hunter will place himself in a blind near the edges of a farm clearing in the early morning and the late afternoon when the crows are going out of the woods or returning. This will bring the crows to investigate.

The crow is an intelligent bird. He also possesses a remarkable resistance to disease.

While these are only a few of the ways the wily crow may be taken, the hunter will develop variations from time to time as he gets to be more and more acquainted with the crow and his disposition.

Although this sport has not yet come into its own in Louisiana it should prove increasingly popular with those who like to keep in practice through year-round shooting. By far the largest expenditure the crow hunter can incur is in the purchase of shotgun shells and there's no limit to the bag.

Did you know that literally millions of ducks were wasted this fall through crippling? Losses in various areas across the country range from 8 to as high as 53 per cent, with a national average of 25 per cent for birds downed in sight of the hunter but not retrieved. X-ray studies show that 25 to 35 per cent of live ducks carry shot. It may well be that one bird is lost for every two taken home.

Reduction of these losses is a simple matter. Just retrieve the ducks you shoot.

* * * * *

If you think Louisiana's game laws are tough, here are some violations and fines recorded in West Virginia: hunting on Sunday ($25.00); carrying uncased gun on Sunday ($20.00); training dogs in closed season ($20.00); loaded gun in vehicle ($20.00).

ALIBIS — THE FISHLESS FISHERMAN'S STANDBY

By

Barry O. Freeman

Mississippi Game and Fish Commission

Have you ever been in a group of fishermen and listened to the many reasons advanced for their coming home with an empty stringer? I know you have, and, if you have been fishing in the last year, you probably added your own alibi.

Let's take a look at a few of these and see if they are true. In some sections you will find a group that fish according to the moon. If they go fishing and come back without the anticipated meal, the moon was in the wrong phase. I hate to throw cold water on this, but it is only an excuse. I have heard the same man say that they bite in the first quarter when he went during the full moon phase and then later say that he should have known better than go fishing for the moon was in the first quarter. There are not any statistics to prove either point, but I don't think it is necessary when the same man is rotating between phases to suit his condition.

Another favorite alibi is the falling barometer. A man should know better than to go fishing when the barometer is falling—that is if he didn't catch any fish! Just recently I saw a picture of a nice string of bass caught during a storm which I am quite sure caused the barometer to fall.

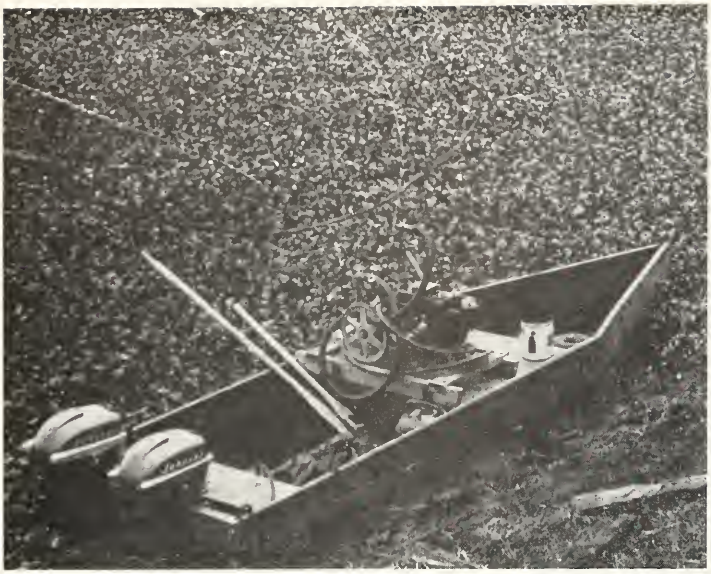
Another sure-fire alibi is the one that this place has been fished out. The Game and Fish Commission needs to restock the area. I have also been on studies that have retired this excuse. Back when I was attempting to learn the in's and out's of fish management in college we had a group of experimental ponds where fishing was permitted. When the ponds got to the point that people said it was fished out, we would get a group and drain it. They were surprised at how many fish were removed when it was drained.

We, who make our living trying to better fishing conditions, have found that often the reason for poor fishing is too many fish rather than not enough. Yes, this seems hard to believe, but a half-starved fish population furnishes poor fishing. Stop and think! Haven't you fished in a new pond and caught nice fat fish almost as fast as you present your bait to them? Several years lapse and you suddenly remember this pond and go dashing out and find that they aren't biting so hot and the few you do catch wouldn't prevent you from reading a newspaper behind them. You start looking around and find that there are literally hundreds of little bream all around the edges. Yep, you are in one of those over-crowded fish populations.

And here is another alibi that has some scientific backing that you might think about. You have seen ads that say, "Are you sure you don't need a man's deodorant?" A fisheries research man found that certain people have an odor that is offensive to fish. This odor is transferred to the bait—results a poor catch.

Have you ever noticed that now and then a new bait comes out and everyone catches fish with it for awhile and then it dies out? There is some evidence that points to the fact that fish become educated especially in small ponds.

Yes, there are alibis and alibis, but in the final analysis it probably boils down to these points: You should improve your fishing techniques, do not go running off to the green pastures all the time but stick with one or two places, and support your Game Commission in its work. If you do the latter to your utmost, the alibis will not be needed as often.



This is the new type portable equipment used by the commission in eradicating the pesty hyacinths in Louisiana streams. The new unit weighs only 500 pounds. This compares with 2500 pound units formerly operated by crews of the commission.

WATER HYACINTH CONTROL

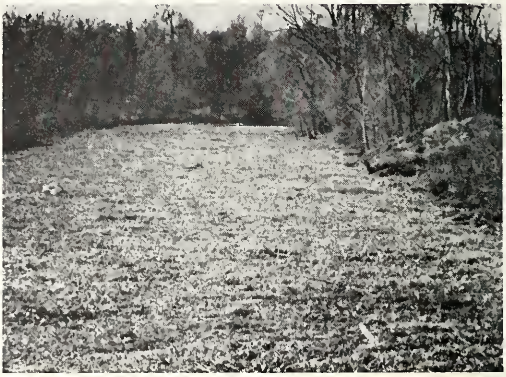
By
Pete Dutton

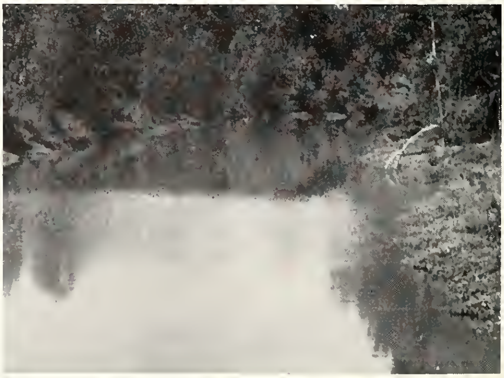
This is another progress report on the fight against the water hyacinth. We are very happy to be able to use the word *progress* because progress has been made as evidenced by many lakes and bayous being either entirely free of this menace, in the process of becoming so, or under acceptable control.

It has been very aptly said that a picture tells more than a thousand words. Therefore, this report is supplemented by several pictures of some of our bodies of water before and after our hyacinth control crews have worked them, showing that the former good fishing qualities of these waters have been restored by removal of water hyacinths.

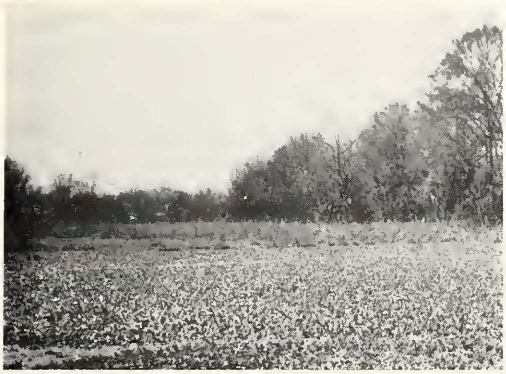
Money, the life blood of our program, has been forthcoming through appropriations by our Legislature in increasing amounts. Our present body of law makers has appropriated the largest amount yet for use in hyacinth control. Careful thought and planning has been advisable in getting such a large undertaking in operation in order that every dollar spent will return the greatest amount of good results. Naturally, these plans call for setting up the most efficient work program possible on as many of our lakes and streams as the amount of money will allow.

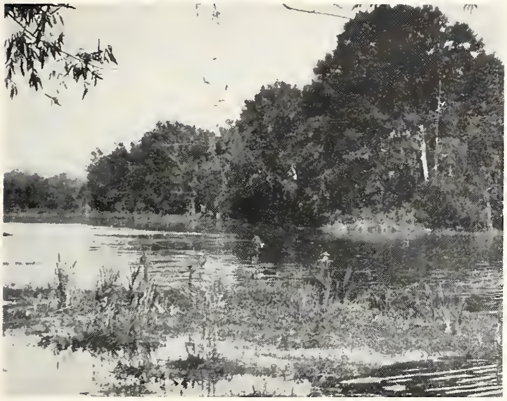
Particular emphasis is to be placed on putting on an "all out" effort beginning about March 1 until the time the hyacinth blooms and produces seeds. This effort will continue after the blooming, but by killing the plant before its seeds mature and spill out into the waters, we offset the production of countless billions of new plants in the future. Some of the seeds that have been deposited in past years will germinate and produce more plants, because it has been shown conclusively by researchers in the past that these seeds will germinate after lying dormant for as long as nine or ten years. Thus we see





In the top photo a canal near Gonzales paralleling the Airline highway is shown clogged with Hyacinth. The lower photo shows the same area cleared.





At the top is shown Old False river before treatment by the commission. Bottom photo of the same area after treatment.

that the program of Hyacinth Control is necessarily a continuing one which, if properly planned and executed, will eventually lead to a status that will cause little or no concern in most of our more desirable fishing waters. However, patrol crews will be necessary in order to maintain such a status which will cost only a fraction of the cost of the present over-all program.

Some outstanding examples of this premise are: Cane River and Old River of Natchitoches Parish to which we are required to send a patrol crew only about once a year, Old River being completely covered for about fifteen miles of its length and Cane River well on its way to being completely covered in 1953, LaCour's Pit north of Morganza, which was three-fourths covered in 1953, the Riverside barrow pit near Patterson, Black Bayou Lake near Monroe, Lake Concordia, Lake St. John, False River, Choctaw Bayou, the Old Chennal above False River, Bay Alcide in Assumption Parish and many others.

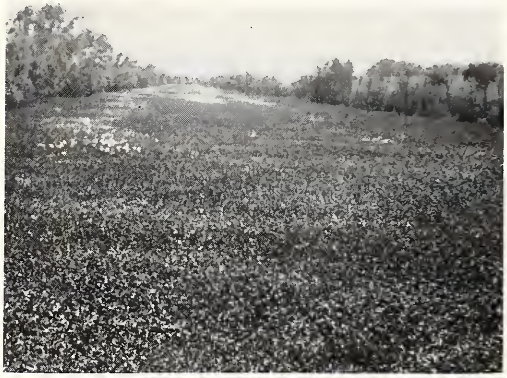
Before many more moons have shown, we hope to have Lake Bistineau and Lake Wallace under hyacinth control. We plan to increase our efforts on these lakes in the near future in order to accomplish this objective in a shorter time.

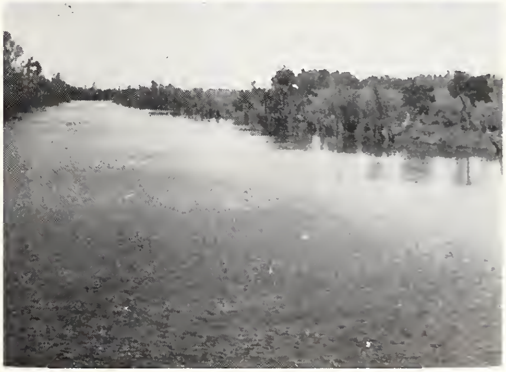
All waters in South Tangipahoa, Livingston and St. Tammany Parishes such as the Amite, Petite Amite, Bayou Barbara, Colyell Bay, Blood River, Tangipahoa, Natalbany, Tickfaw, and Tchefuncta are in excellent condition with respect to water hyacinths. We are now concentrating our efforts on the small canals or drainage ditches and sloughs which feed hyacinths into these streams.

The Atchafalaya Flats in Northern Iberville Parish are now under control, but will receive a doubled effort beginning with the return of the spring high waters which will probably cause the germination of millions of dormant seeds.

The waters of Avoyelles Parish, reached from the Spring Bayou Landing near Marksville are furnishing great opportunities for water fowl shooting as well as furnishing access routes to localities where hunting of all kinds can be done. But the greatest value of these waters lies in the abundance of game and commercial fish found in them. During the greater part of each year since we have brought about a condition of control of water hyacinths in these waters, thousands of fishermen have swarmed to this area each week and come away with well filled creels. The economic value of such to Marksville is immeasurable, but it can be assumed that these Waltonians spend a sizeable amount of cash in that area on each visit. The hyacinth control section will continue its efforts and vigilance to retain this condition, or improve it, so that those who come from a distance, as well as those who have spent thousands of dollars for camps and businesses relating to hunting and fishing, and the commercial and sports fishermen who have invested heavily in boats, tackle and other gear, will not have done so in vain.

Bayou Rouge, north of Melville, has always been a favored habitat of black bass of the five pound variety. In the Spring





Top photo shows the Hyacinth clogged area of the upper False river beyond Patin's dike. The lower illustration is the same area following treatment by crews of the Hyacinth control section of the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries commission.

of 1954 this stream became almost completely covered with water hyacinths. Luckily we were able to prevent this before any loss of fish occurred and we can now point to it as one of our finest achievements in hyacinth control. We hope and plan to keep it so.

We hope to equip our crews with necessary equipment that will enable us to bring about a condition of control of water hyacinths on such lakes as Des Allemand, Verret, Caddo, Penchant, Hatch, Theriot and Hackberry. The first three named are quite large and relatively shallow which characteristics cause them to be too hazardous for our crews in using the small fourteen foot boats. The need for a much larger and more powerful, shallow-draft boat, with an inboard engine is indicated. For the four latter named lakes we will use our air boats because of the high infestation by many varieties of underwater grasses which prohibit efficient use of boats driven by the conventional type propeller.

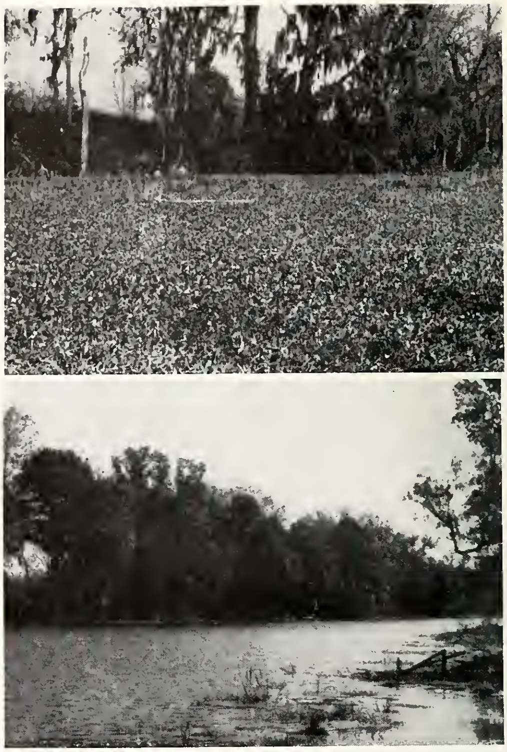
Plans are being made to put crews to work on the waterways around Morgan City. These waters have not received our attention as yet because of limited funds.

We have recently started three crews to work in the Henderson area where they will control water hyacinths in the Atchafalaya Basin and on the outside pit down to Lake Fausse Point. Opalousas and Whiskey Bays, as well as Lost Lake will receive special attention.

Since the Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries commission is vitally concerned with bringing about a control of water hyacinths to improve wildlife and fisheries facilities, especially fisheries, we feel that we should try to show proof that this is being done. This we have endeavored to do by submitting photographs of the results of our work.

One of the best of the many opening day comments, this one from a column by Red Smith in the *New York Herald Tribune* for May 1:

. . . It is an article of faith that fish are by no means essential to fishing, but evidence of their presence does add something to a sport that is almost perfect without them. . . .



At the top is a section of the 15-mile long Riverside plantation pit near Patterson before treatment. In the lower photo the same area is shown following work completed by Hyacinth control crews.

DEER OVERPOPULATION PRESENTS PROBLEM

The deer of southern Colorado have been presenting a problem to game-management men for some time. The Colorado Commission is trying to cope with the overpopulation and depleted browse condition. The fall hunt of either sex, October 15-31, did not sufficiently reduce the excess deer population, and the Commission added a 30-day either-sex hunt ending February 20, 1957.

This same problem extends down into New Mexico and the wildlife management men of the Department of Game and Fish have recommended longer seasons to Director Pickens, who in turn has made the same recommendation to the Commission. The Commission, by legislative action, is responsible for establishing seasons. For the past few years, longer seasons have been granted for the areas of Colfax County and the Canadian River watershed all along the Colorado border, but the one long season thus far has not made any appreciable inroad upon the deer population.

Pickens and his staff are keeping a sharp eye on the results of the two seasons in Colorado to determine whether this plan aids in the proper harvest of the game. The deer herds have increased all along the Colorado-New Mexico line at an alarming rate. Coupled with the drouth, the browse situation has become critical and a very heavy harvest is needed to prevent a heavy die-off brought on by malnutrition.

Not only is the future of the wildlife at stake, but already considerable agricultural damage has been incurred because of the shortage of browse in the forests.

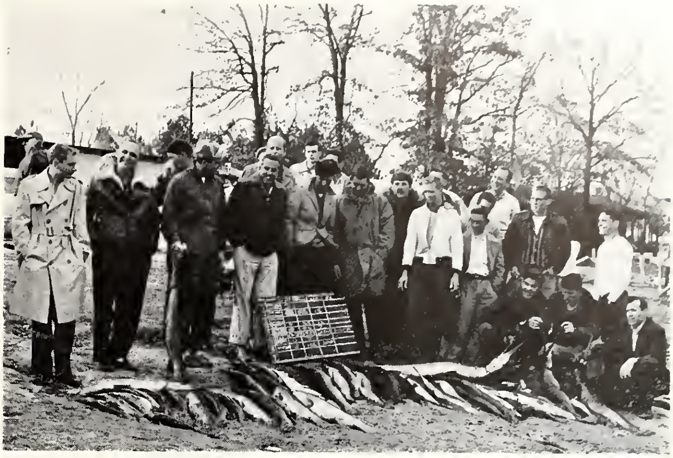
Much of the land area involved is privately owned. This presents another problem, in that seasons must be set in such a way and at such a time as to conflict as little as possible with regular ranching operations.

"You think you have problems?" asked Pickens. "Just try setting seasons to please the hunter, that will not conflict with the landowner, and yet harvest the crop of game to the extent of good game-management practices. It's truly the most challenging business in the world."

In an area overpopulated by deer, animals compete for food in the fall. After the lowest browse is consumed by all the deer, the adults reach up to feed on shrubs and trees: but the fawns cannot reach as high and they are the first to starve. Hunting helps to remove the over supply of adults and permits the fawns to get enough to eat.

Hunting regulations vary: in some states only the adult bucks may be taken. (These comprise only about ten percent of the deer.) In other states, does may also be taken in the fall. Wildlife managers recommend at least 30 percent reduction in fall deer herds because forests, like pastures, can feed only a limited number of animals.

Skin Divers Wage War On Gar!

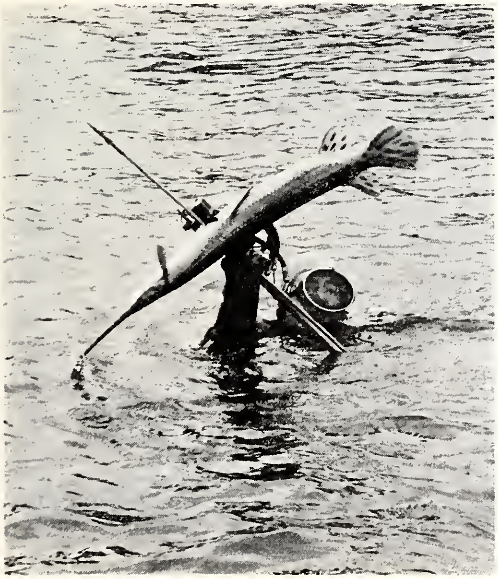


Weighing complete, results tabulated on the board, the contestants survey their kill of 63 gar weighing overr 550 pounds. Club members include, engineers, airline pilots, radio and television executives, geologists, craftsmen, students, ex-frogmen and several wives (none of whom entered the cold water contest).

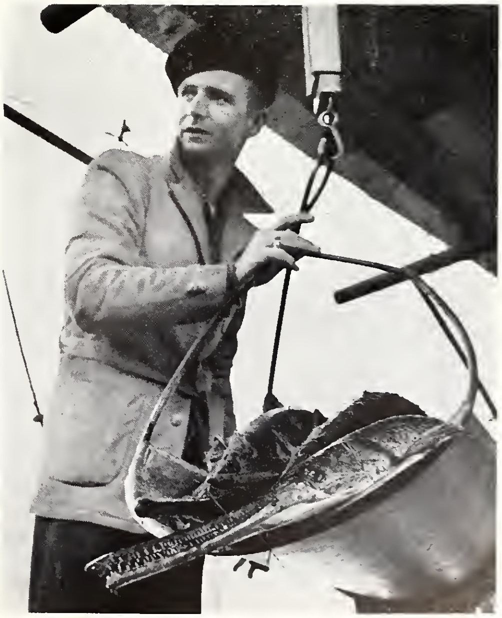
On December 9th, the Ark-La-Tex Divers, Inc., Shreveport skin divers club, sponsored an underwater spearfishing gar rodeo in upper Lake Bistineau, the first such event to be held in the State of Louisiana. Participating were twenty-five divers from Shreveport, Jefferson, Texas, Lafayette, La. and Dallas, Texas. Prizes were offered for the largest single gar, the greatest aggregate poundage of gar and the largest number of gar killed by a team.

As the contest opened at 8:30 a.m., the day was overcast and blustery, air temperature 33°. Eight three-man teams each using two boats fanned out to search for the schools of gar which are frequently found lying on the lake bottom in semi-hibernation this time of the year. The water was a nippy 50° and reasonably clear, 8′ to 20′ visibility, although high winds during the preceding week had caused some murkiness. Those divers familiar with the lake classified the day as "about average" for the winter (summer diving in Bistineau is not considered practical due to reduction of visibility by algae growth during the warm weather).

All of the contestants wore rubber frogman suits over insulating underwear of wool or quilted dacron. Most of the



Using a snorkel, rather than underwater breathing gear, a diver surfaces with his first kill, a 10-pound "long-nosed" gar.



At the close of the contest, Bill Allen Jr.—Shreveport roofing contractor and a contest official, begins to weigh the kill. Note needle sharp teeth of large gar in foreground.

Winning team (l. to r.) Dan Milner, Richard Farr and Brad Boyer display kill of 22 gar weighing 193 pounds. Farr also killed largest gar—29 pounds.

A club member displays a 100 pound alligator gar taken from the spillway area of Lake Bistineau. Thus far this is the largest gar taken by skin divers, although it was not entered in the contest.

hunting was done by "snorkeling" divers (without underwater breathing gear), using rubber or compressed air powered spearguns. However, in some murky areas divers were forced to use their "lungs" to search the bottom effectively.

As the contest closed at 2:30 p.m., the gar kill was weighed. A total of 63 gar (all "long-nosed" except for one small "alligator") were taken. Total weight was 550 pounds. Largest single gar was 29 pounds. The event was well covered by both local television stations and newspapers.

Although they conduct only one formal contest each year, the Ark-La-Tex Divers members visit the lake each week that water conditions are suitable and remove several hundred pounds of gar therefrom on many such occasions. Quite a few of the sport divers are anglers or ex-anglers and have a first hand appreciation of the value of gar removal to game-fishing. The divers also express great interest in being able to observe first hand the habits of the other fish; bass, bream, crappie, barfish, catfish, bowfin, gaspergou, shad, etc., in their native element. All agree that the bass has by far the most curiousity of any of the fresh water fish. It is not unusual for yearling bass to follow a diver in much the fashion of playful puppies.

The divers frequently cooperate with game fisherman to retrieve their gear and point out fishing "hot spots". They have also expressed their appreciation for the courtesy shown them by agents of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries commission and have offered their services to them should they be required.

COMMISSION EXTENDS TRAPPING SEASON ON MUSKRAT AND NUTRIA

At a regular scheduled meeting of the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission held on January 8, the trapping season was extended to March 15, 1957. It was pointed out however, that this extension would apply only to the muskrat and nutria.

Reasons for this extension were chiefly centered around weather conditions that prevailed around the first two weeks of the season. Trappers had reported that due to the extremely warm weather at that time, the pelts were not prime, or in a condition to bring fair returns.

Ray Rhymes of Rayville holds a nice string of bass taken from Clear Lake in Richland parish. Clear Lake was poisoned and restocked by the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries commission.

Key To Prehistoric Ages Found In Louisiana Bayous

As the result of an expedition into an area of Louisiana which is without fossils, scientists have found answers and guideposts to questions concerning fossils found in Indiana. This apparent paradox was brought out as a result of an exploration of the lower Mississippi river delta country by Eugene Richardson, Jr., and Ranier Zangerl, two curators of the Chicago Natural History Museum.

The scientists had been working on the museum's latest geological exploration called the Mecca project aimed at deciphering the story of the life and environment of a vast shallow sea that drowned a forest near Mecca, Indiana, 240,000,000 years ago. The picture was pretty complete, they realized, but the question remained. How had these fossils remained intact in the apparently shifting mud of the prehistoric lake? Louisiana produced the key to the dilema and in their own words they tell of how it was found here.

"Our basic information in Mecca, Indiana, is pried from what was once black mud on the bottom of that sea. We had split the rock, a black shale, to thin shards, and charted the position, character, and orientation of more than 62,000 fossils and fossil fragments in it. We had recorded clues to the depth of the ancient sea, its temperature, its saltiness, and of course its plant and animal life."

"But to interpret out clues and to understand what they mean in terms of actual geographic environment that once existed, we had to know what environments were possible. 'The present,' says every geology textbook, 'is the key to the past.' How indeed could it be otherwise? All the factors of an environment are controlled by natural forces — gravitation, atomospheric convection, erosion and deposition, chemical affinities, and many others; and natural forces, we are convinced, have nothing to do with time. They are in effect today, they operated in the past, and the future will know their continued validity.

Thus, with a general idea of what is possible and what is not, and with due attention to the immutable laws of nature, we were able to build up in our minds a developing picture of the Mecca environment as we went along. The sea was shallow (because it had advanced slowly across a nearly flat shore); it was exceptionally quiet (because the black bituminous mud had accumulated in undisturbed sheets and decaying fishes lying on the bottom were buried without being moved); it was warm (because the Coal Age climate was warm); it was connected with the open ocean (because it contains a few far-swimming marine shellfish); but it was not a normally healthful marine environment (because the usual marine creatures of the time were not able to live in it); it was, in fact, from time to time quite a poisonous place (because thousands of fishes died there); black muck accumulated rapidly on its bottom (quickly covering the dead fishes before they had completely decayed).

So far, so good. This is, after all, a pretty complete picture. But certain questions plauged us. How can a black muck accumulate quickly in water that has no current to carry it? How can a good-sized body of water be both shallow and quiet, so the wind and waves won't stir up the bottom? Just how long does it take for bacteria to reduce a fish carcass to its component bones, anyway?

Bayou La Branche is one of those traversing swamps where exploring scientists went in search of answers to the past.

We searched the world's scientific literature for answers and found that, though similar questions had come up before, they were in slightly different context and the answers weren't quite in line with what we wanted. So for a while we gave up looking in the rock for our answers, put the books back on the shelves, and set out to find some modern environment that would match what we knew of ancient Mecca.

Because Coal Age Mecca was subtropical, we looked for a region with subtropical climate. Because the flooded land was flat, we looked for a flat country, partly under water. Because it lay near the sea, we went toward the sea. Everything combined, then, to draw us to the Mississippi Delta country in Louisiana in the summer season, and thither we went last July, seeking a modern Mecca. New Orleans is, of course, a "Mecca" in another sense — a more usual sense. For us it became doubly Mecca. We needed laboratory facilities, and with hospitality surely more generous than even the fabled Southern variety, Professor Fred Cagle and his staff of the Department of Zoology at Tulane University in New Orleans provided space for us to work and all the equipment we needed for exploring the swamps and lakes of the Delta country.

It was with Tulane's outboard motorboat that we made our way through bayous and lagoons; with their microscope we studied the muds and animal life; in their alcohol we brought some of our evidence back to the Museum. We remain deeply grateful to many men of the Tulane staff for guiding us in the field and for sharing with us their detailed knowledge of the area. Dr. Royal Suttkus, Dr. George Penn, Dr. Milton Fingerman, Dr. Joseph Young, and Dr. and Mrs. Cagle, of the Department of Zoology, freely gave us their time; Mr. Fitzjarrel, the many-talented custodian of that department, found us all the supplies and equipment we needed. Dr. Donald Tinkle, about to assume a teaching position in Texas, guided us on foot into the swamps of the Sarpy Wildlife Refuge and there shared with us a subtropical thunderstorm. Joseph Ewen, of the Department of Botany, instructed us in recognizing the different vegetation of salt-and freshwater-marshes. Dr. Richard J. Russell, Dean of the Graduate College at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, told us of his work in the geographic study of the Gulf Coastal Plain, and Ed Orton, of the Institute of Coastal Plain Studies at Louisiana State University, guided us to Lake Hatch when Dean Russell's description of it persuaded us that here, indeed, was Mecca. The help and interest of these people were equivalent to months of travel and study.

The country to which they introduced us is very different from that of Illinois — or of present-day Mecca, Indiana. It is flat, lying very near to sea level (parts of the city of New Orleans itself are below sea level), the only natural relief being the natural levees along the Mississippi River and also those marking its abandoned courses. These natural levees, rising a few feet above the general level of the swamps, determine the location of towns, roads, and railroads. Thus a typical Delta town, like the city of Houma, though surrounded by miles of unpeopled land, is itself crowded and compact. Between the towns in the southern part of the Delta are extensive marshes and numerous shallow lakes of fresh or brackish water. Farther north, in the vicinity of New Orleans itself, are the storied cypress swamps, large expanses of forest knee-deep in water, drained by deeper waterways, the natural bayous and the man-made canals. Behind the city of New Orleans lies large and shallow Lake Pontchartrain, its mud bottom rich in plant debris. We had thought that this lake might provide us with an analogy to Mecca, but we soon learned that any wind stirs up the bottom, and we had to discard Lake Pontchartrain.

The swamps, while immune to wind, support a forest growth, as Mecca did not. The bayous, natural drainageways through the swamps, are also protected from wind, but they carry an appreciable current that keeps their bottoms scoured. However, garfish live in the bayous, as their remote ancestors, the palaeoniscoid fishes, lived at Mecca; and the bottom sediment in swamp and bayou is in large part decomposed plant-matter, as it was at Mecca. So we examined some typical bayous, finding some aspects of Mecca recreated for us.

Many of the bayous, where not kept cleared by man, are choked with floating vegetation. The water hyacinth and the alligator weed, fast-growing plants dangling their roots in water rather than sinking them into soil, cover all untended water that is not too salty and interfere seriously with navigation. We found that this weedy mat will support a man, but only if he lies prone and is willing to be about half submerged. Walking on it might be possible with extra-large snowshoes (a feat that we didn't try).

Dean Russell told us of the flotant, a unique type of marsh confined to the Delta country. Here, the surface of a lake or bayou is covered by the floating mat of water hyacinth and alligator weed, but other plants—reeds, rushes, grasses, and finally dry-land weeds and even shrubs have taken root upon it, making a well-knit upper crust as much as two or three feet thick. Beneath the flotant may be water of any depth; alligators and especially garpike live under it as seals live under the polar ice, and, like the seals, they have holes here and there for air.

With Mr. Orton's guidance, we explored a typical mature flotant, covering the surface of Lake Hatch, south of Houma. Near the shore of the lake, where we first stepped upon it, the flotant readily supports the weight of a man, though it gives underfoot, and one feels he is walking on a mattress. As in the muskeg swamps of the north, if one man jumps on the flotant, his companions bounce. Farther from shore, the vegetation becomes thinner as fewer and fewer shrubs, rushes, and land-plants lend their roots and stems to the knitting of the mattress. Here, we found, it is only too easy to step through the vegetation rather than upon it. Farher along, paches of pure water hyacinth and alligator weed are found, on which even prone creeping is difficult. In our brief foray onto Lake Hatch, though we gained a considerable distance from the shore, we never did manage to arrive at the open water. No matter; we were already far enough out to sink our coring rod into the bottom for a mud sample, and we were persuaded that here was an answer to some of the Mecca questions.

The floating vegetation, whether firm enough to walk on or not, is the most effective damper of wind and wave. With such a cover, a body of water may be both shallow and quiet. Also, the cover is the source of the great quantity of decayed vegetation required to produce a black bituminous sediment such as that at Mecca. Lake Hatch, however, is not the perfect analogy; its water is fresh. In fresh water, sediment remains in suspension rather than settling quickly to the lake floor, and as a result, there is no definite bottom. Instead, the water becomes muddier and muddier with depth, and presently is a muddy soup, then a soupy mud, then a harder mud, and finally clay. We found that our coring rod sank about 10 feet into Lake Hatch of its own weight and could be pushed another 14 feet with virtually no pressure before it finally brought up anything at all solid. This was not the condition in Mecca, where fish carcasses lay on a solid bottom, and where dead sharks sank head first into mud, leaving body and tail to the attention of oxygen-using bacteria. However, if the water were slightly salty, a process known as flocculation would cause the sediment to sink rapidly, and the lake would have a more definite floor. Thus a salt or brackish body of water covered with a mat of vegetation would answer for Mecca. As it happens, the flotant of the present day cannot grow on salty water, but it is entirely possible (even, we think, probable) that a similar mat might have grown on the surface of our shallow Mecca sea.

Now, another of the initial questions set us to wondering how long it took to accumulate the black shale at Mecca. But rate of deposition, especially under a flotant, is difficult to measure, and Dr. Russell informed us that little was known on this problem. We attempted an indirect estimate of the rate of mud accumulation. When an animal dies, it is immediately attacked by bacteria, causing decay, and the rate of decay depends on the temperature and on the amount of oxygen available to the bacteria. Decay continues, with attendant scattering of the separated parts of the carcass, until it is buried and the bacteria smothered; thereafter another group of bacteria, using no oxygen, takes over and the flesh is entirely consumed. If a fish carcass lies on the bottom of a lake, the oxygen-using bacteria will reduce it to bare bones in — but here's what no one could tell us — in how long a time? a month? three months? If we knew that, we could estimate the rate of shale formation at Mecca, for there our fossil fishes are found in various easily recgonizable stages of disarticulation.

In our experiment, we had to assume the temperature conditions and the oxygen supply, and we had to assume that bacteria of a quarter of a billion years ago operated just like our modern acquaintances. But to evaluate the variables as much as possible, we picked several different underwater environments in the Delta country. Here we set out dead fishes in screen cages to keep off the larger scavengers, and kept track of the rate of decay in water of various characters. To our surprise, we found that one week was sufficient to reduce a ¾ pound fish to clean disjointed bones in water ranging from 79 degrees to over 100 degrees and with a variation in saltiness from a brackish coastal lagoon to the nearly fresh water of a cypress swamp. Apparently our variables of temperatures and salt were not highly critical. At the present time, we have other fishes being observed for us by co-operators in Massachusetts, Idaho, and Illinois. Early returns show that in these appreciably cooler waters the decay rate is much slower than in Louisiana, as one might expect.

The surprisingly consistent results of the fish-rotting experiments in the South give us a means of estimating how long it took for enough black sediment to settle on the Mecca fishes to prevent further disarticulation and scattering of the bones, and thus how long it took to form the shale.

Mystery Of Life

By
Earl Wallace

The things man wants of life are there for the taking. He travels long journeys in search of the big bass and small bream.

Life is a short eventful journey between two mysterious eternities—the eternity of boundless centuries before it began, and the eternal, endless ages that will come after death. To man, it is the childhood of immortality—to other things, the gala dress parade before oblivion.

The beginning and ending of life are, to man, the earth's most perplexing mysteries. We know the necessary steps to the fertilization of the ova of the female plant or animal to form a new and separate life, but we do not know why this process forms a new living thing. Beyond the intelligence of man is the secret master stroke of life's creation—a mystery kept well by the Creator of all things.

Many times in their research, scientists have isolated the component parts and elements of seed and carefully put them together again as perfectly as possible. These creations have responded to the warmth of the sun and the moisture of the earth by swelling preparatory to sending up a living plant. The testa or covering would go through the process of splitting as the seed absorbed the moisture from the soil, and the man-made embryo would start to unfold its tiny man-made leaves. Then—suddenly—these pretenses would stop, and the composition begin to decay. Everything was there except the unseen magic impulse of creation supplied through nature by the Ruler of the Universe.

Likewise, similar experiments have been tried on various animals, but all have failed. In some cases, the ova of some of the lower forms of living things have been stimulated into new life by man's synthetic processes and, apparently, without the aid of male fertilization, but investigation has disclosed that, in all instances, the parent subjects of the particular species possessed both male and female possibilities, and that the male germ or spermatazoon was in a state of latency, and the synthetic materials only stimulated it into action sufficient to fuse with the female ova and cause life. Man, in these instances, only supplied assistance to the sleeping organisms that were already there through the natural processes of the parent.

The infinite power to produce new life is not administered separately to every individual of a species. It was supplied in the beginning, and every living thing was given the natural powers of regeneration which has continued through the ages.

The mystery of just why life begins will possibly never be solved. We know the principle, but the supreme inspiration that plants the spark of actuality into a living thing will, perhaps, always be beyond the reason of man.

Living things, themselves, have no knowledge of their beginning. The violet gives no evidence of where and how it got its blue, as it grows beside its white cousin. The laughing loon gives no hint of the origin of its eerie laugh, as it swims beside the silent swan. Nature provided all things with certain characteristics that function properly to make each species what it is.

There has always been controversy and disagreement among men who believe in divine creation and those who believe in evolution. There is little reason for this if we will give common sense consideration to the facts. We all have to believe in evolution, because it is happening right before us every day. Man's intelligence, added to nature's possibilities, hastens the process. The Delicious Apple and hybrid corn might have happened through natural processes in a thousand years, but with man's aid they were developed in a much shorter time. The same is true in the improvement of domestic livestock and the modern garden flowers.

When men began to keep written records and write of the things on earth, life had been in existence for thousands of years. Even if they recorded their present day facts, all they said of the past were their own opinions or a mere deduction that might have been wrong. Writers have a custom of coloring the things they write about. Many of those who have read Harold Bell Wright's immortal "Shepherd of the Hills," could never be convinced that the Shepherd never lived. Dante's Inferno is the overdrawn characterization of fantastic creatures and people, and so are a thousand other tales. It is easy to believe that the patriarchs that wrote the Bible and of creation used their imaginations to impress men with the importance of God and religion. They wrote of the creation of man and all the things of the earth as the result of dreams and prophetic visions inspired by some Supernatural Power. They believed

Fertilization of ponds and streams provides many anglers with both fish and recreation.

they were true, and no one can reliably dispute them. Their belief was that Divinity fashioned the form and life of all creatures and many men believe the same today.

"Science teaches that all life as it is today has been the process of stages of evolution because of climate changes, environmental conditions, and adaptation. We can hardly dispute this.

Isn't it just as possible to believe that a cow was developed from some amoebic form of life, through the centuries, as it is to believe that the modern cottage of today is the result of a grain of pollen falling on the stigma of a flower to produce a seed that grew into a pine from which lumber was made? If Divinity created the things of the earth, could not that same Divinity have been the Master Hand that directed the processes of evolution in order to improve upon the original creation? Science and religion have no dispute insofar as creation is concerned.

The mystery of death is just as puzzling as the mystery of life. Death is a part of life. We know why things die, but we do not know what death really is. Man has never been able to get any authentic information beyond the end of life.

We know that each living thing is composed of cells that combine to make up the various vital organs necessary to sustain life. Failure of any of these organs to function properly will weaken resistance and, eventually, result in death. After that, there is nothing but a sealed labyrinth, unknown and unsolved by the minds of scholars and science. To man, death is the narrow doorway that opens to the corridor of eternal life—to all other things, it is the dark quietness of oblivion—we know no more. No person or thing has ever returned from death to enlighten or tell us of its mystery.

The fallen buck never complains to his slayer of the sting of the bullet and the passing of life. The graveyard on the hill speaks not to man. Each mouldering mound holds well within its cell the secret trusted to its keeping. The skeleton of the animal in the field rots with no enlightening sound, and the dead oak disintegrates and falls away in silence. By the roadside, the frozen Blue Stem incoherently rattles of death in the winter wind, and the drying shell of the turtle speaks nothing of its silent realm.

Between these two eternities is life—joyful—sorrowful—tragic. It knows of success and failure—peace and war—love and hate—following the pattern decreed by Divinity unless side-tracked by the lure and temptation of some influence conceived by evil.

The tree sprouts from the rich earth, grows to maturity, and bears the fruits of regeneration. Fields of grain come to life with the warmth of spring to form billowing waves in the wind and produce an abundant harvest. The locust crawls from its earthly home to hum out the tune of dying summer and fox cubs play away their puppyhood to hunt under the moon.

Man lives through the golden age of youth with hope and ambition stirring his blood to the highest. With head erect and not to be conquered, he marches to maturity to receive the reward planned and made for himself. It is here that he seeks no tranquility; his nature drives him forward to fortunes which, for better or worse, are not enough for him to pause to enjoy. The things he wants of life are there for his taking, and he drives on to become old.

In old age he longs for the tranquility that was scorned in the busy years. Peacefulness and quietness become important as he watches the color drain out of the sun and spill over the western hills in the glow of a summer sunset.

The mystery of life will go on until the will of the Creator decrees it shall end. Individually things will run their part of the relay and retire into eternity, their place to be taken by the newly born of the various species.

The meadows and the woodlands will continue to bloom and bear their fruits of regeneration. Men will travel the short, eventful journey, giving to other men the value of the progress they were destined to give and become the progenitors of other men.

Temperaments of nations will, perhaps, respond to the will of their rulers to the ultimate decree of peace and war. The old will give way to the new, and the whip-poor-will will sing into the night.

The mystery will remain a mystery.

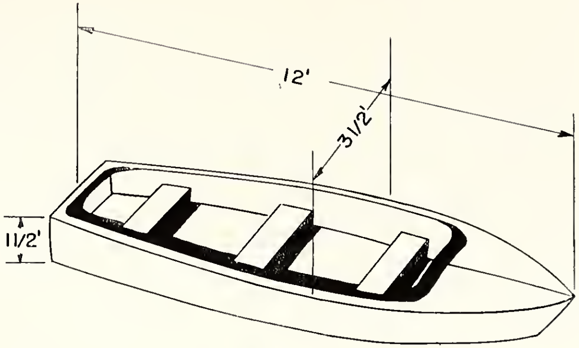
Leslie G. Orr of Shreveport holding string of bass boated in Lake Bistineau.

KNOW THE CARRYING CAPACITY OF YOUR BOAT IT MAY SAVE YOUR LIFE

THIS BOAT HAS A
SAFE CAPACITY OF
473 POUNDS

$$\left(\frac{12\times3.5\times1.5\times0.6}{12}\right)150$$

REMEMBER—Make adequate allowance for the weight of your motor and equipment.



HERE'S HOW TO COMPUTE IT

Length times maximum width, times maximum depth, times 0.6 divided by 12, multiplied by 150, except where the beam measurements are 48", use 19" as maximum depth; 49" to 52", use 20" as maximum depth; 53" to 56, use 21" as maximum depth; 57" or over use 22" as maximum depth. *(Outboard Boating Club of America Formula)*

TRUST YOUR BOAT—Capsizing your boat is bad enough, but leaving it in deep water in an attempt to swim to shore is even more dangerous. Many drowings in Louisiana have occurred to persons trying to reach shore after their boats have swamped or turned turtle.

When filled with water, a 16-foot wooden boat can support a dozen persons clinging to the sides where they can safely await help. Modern metal boats, most of which have air tanks, will also float when turned over. A water-filled boat is better than no boat at all.

And remember: it's always farther to shore than you think. The boat may be your only link with life. Don't leave it!

MRS RUTH CAMPBELL
CURATOR OF LA ROOM
LA STATE UNIV
BATON ROUGE LA

One of Louisiana's beautiful fishing spots. *(Photo by Jack Britt)*